LIVERPOOL SCHOOL
OF TROPICAL MEDICINE

HIST. SCH. M.

FIFTY YEARS of PROGRESS

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Fifty Years of Progress.

It is now over fifty years since the School started, and we may look back on our record with great pride. The wide extension of trade with the tropical Colonies that took place in the second half of the last century exposed more and more Europeans to tropical diseases and the death rate among them, especially in West Africa, was far higher than could long be tolerated. It was in March, 1898, that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, wrote to all the Medical Schools in the United Kingdom, asking that they should promote research and teaching into Tropical Medicine, so that all medical officers selected for appointments in the Tropics should enter on their careers with some expert knowledge. This request was welcomed, especially in those places, notably Liverpool and London, where cases of tropical disease landed from ships were already common. These cases provided at once a need for skilled attention, and material for research and teaching, and it was not surprising that the Liverpool School was set up in conjunction with the Royal Southern Hospital and the London School with the Seamen's Hospital, Greenwich, within a few months of each other in 1899. The last named had the personal enthusiasm of Mr. Chamberlain behind it, while ours owed its start to Alfred Jones, head of the Elder Dempster Line and to his friend, Rubert Boyce, Professor of Pathology in the (then) University College.

Alfred Jones provided the money, the overseas knowledge and the business drive, which Boyce matched with scientific knowledge and unusual vision. Alfred Jones was the first Chairman and Boyce the first Dean, positions they held until their respective deaths in 1909 and 1911. While much help was received from other sources, there can be little doubt that the foundation of the School would hardly have taken place without the enthusiastic efforts of these two great men. They played a leading part in its first years, but in this they received invaluable assistance from Ronald Ross, the second member of the staff to be engaged, as Lecturer in Tropical Diseases at £250 per annum. At that time so little was known about tropical diseases and their causes, that the most urgent need was the collection of information and specimens in the field. Ronald Ross was a man of intense energy and ability and his flair for knowing where to look for the missing links in the chain was one of the chief causes of the School's immediate success.

[ca. 1949]

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No less than thirty-one expeditions were sent out by the School in the first fifteen years of its life up to the outbreak of war in 1914. Boyce took part in four of these and Ross in six, but their inspiration was no doubt felt on the others—staffed for the most part by young Doctors in the employ of the School, two of whom died of the diseases they were investigating. In addition to the expeditions, which penetrated to most parts of the Tropics, a Laboratory was maintained in Manaos for several years before 1914 and after 1918 for the study of Yellow Fever. It is not possible in a short review to give the names of those who distinguished themselves in those years, or to detail the financial straits which beset the School, which from the first was overwhelmed with desirable (and expensive) objects for research. Under Alfred Jones's will the School received several large bequests, which put its finances on to a sound basis and enabled the Council to build its present home which was just being finished in August, 1914, and was used as a tropical diseases hospital throughout World War I. The money for the Tropical Ward of the Royal Infirmary came from the same source, but the specific bequest for the erection of a Tropical Diseases Laboratory in Sierra Leone was not implemented until 1920.

The staff was seconded freely for investigations into the serious outbreaks of tropical disease in World War I, but by 1919 was reassembled with Dr. J. W. W. Stephens as Professor of Tropical Medicine, R. Newstead, F.R.S., Professor of Entomology, and Dr. Warrington Yorke, Professor of Parasitology, with Dr. Blacklock as his Lecturer. These made a strong team, which continued the advances of the pre-war years. The endowments which looked comparatively generous in 1914 seemed less ample in 1920, as salaries and other expenses had doubled in the interval, and the School was again rather short of money. Expeditions were no longer frequent, partly because of the cost, and partly because the volume of material, supplemented by the larger number of medical officers working in the Tropics, was by that time sufficient to support large scale fundamental research at home. The existence of the Laboratory at Freetown was another factor. It was staffed by the School ; its Director having the title of Professor of Tropical Diseases of Africa in the University of Liverpool. This link with the Tropics was invaluable to the School, ideas from Pembroke Place being tried out in Freetown, and new facts noted in Freetown being worked back into the sum of knowledge available in Liverpool. The stream of stimulating papers appearing in the *Annals* in the inter-war period is proof of the fruitfulness of this interchange of knowledge

and ideas between persons accustomed to working together. The Laboratory had, however, one disadvantage in that it concentrated the School's attention on West Africa and indeed only on a part of that, so that it tended to lose the contacts with other parts of the Tropical world, that the expeditions had created and maintained. The Laboratory had to be closed in 1941 owing to staffing difficulties, and the building has now been disposed of to the Colonial Office, but the intention is that it should maintain its connection with the School as one of a series of Research Centres being developed by the Colonial Medical Research Committee. While expeditions in their original form have ceased, the School staff is constantly in demand to fly hither and thither for investigations, and intimate contact with many parts of the Tropics is now being maintained.

As curative medicine became more widely known and practised, the emphasis shifted, as in this country, to preventive medicine, a fact that was recognised by the creation in 1934 of a Chair of Tropical Hygiene of which Dr. Blacklock was the first holder. This led in due course to the amalgamation of the Diplomas in Tropical Medicine and Tropical Hygiene because it was felt that students studying at the School should have some practical knowledge of the principles of preventive medicine as well as those of general Tropical Medicine and Parasitology. Teaching is based on the assumption that the diploma primarily covers deficiencies in the ordinary medical curriculum with regard to tropical disease, without being in any sense a specialist course. New trends in teaching may also be seen in the approach of the Department of Entomology and Parasitology towards the teaching of these subjects. In the old days most teaching and a considerable amount of research was carried out with preserved material from abroad, but now both teaching and research are more often directed towards the study of living parasites and the various insects and other creatures which transmit these organisms to man and his domestic stock. In short, the museum is giving place to the zoo. In order to teach parasitology for application in the field and to provide material for research, many live strains of insects, worms, molluscs and protozoa have been established, work entailing much special equipment and unceasing care.

One other aspect of the School's work must be specially mentioned—the remarkable chemotherapeutic researches of Warrington Yorke, which continued until his death in 1943. Yorke and his assistants discovered methods of keeping trypanosomes alive in cultures and studying the action of drugs upon them. A great many

substances were examined and new compounds were tried experimentally in Liverpool, and some investigated further in the field in Africa. Some of these have proved of considerable value in the early treatment of trypanosomiasis (sleeping sickness) and resistant cases of kala azar, and their development was an achievement of lasting value to tropical medicine. In his Royal Society obituary notice of Yorke, Wenyon said : " He had the satisfaction of knowing before he died that he had been instrumental in introducing for the treatment of two of the most intractable tropical diseases remedies which will . . . lead to the saving of many human lives."

The School was fortunate throughout this period in enlisting the services of a series of distinguished Chairmen. The first Lord Leverhulme from 1910 to 1913, Sir Francis Danson from 1913 to 1926, Sir Frederick Bowring from 1926 to 1934, and, lastly, the second Lord Leverhulme, whose untimely death in the early part of this year we still mourn.

There is no need to detail the events of the years since 1939, which are set out fully in the Annual Reports. Suffice it to say that in World War II the depleted staff were worked almost to the limits of endurance, travelling, training Doctors for Tropical Service, and later in attending the very large number of patients suffering from often undetected Tropical diseases, who returned sick from the various theatres of war. Four years have now passed and the interest in Tropical Medicine grows steadily greater. Much larger funds have been made available, and the staff has been expanded by recruiting doctors who served in the Tropics during the war. The School passes its fiftieth milestone with unabated vigour and is now backed by a reputation which has made Liverpool famous throughout the world. The commercial community of Liverpool, whose money and interest made the School possible, have every reason to be proud of the achievements of the School's brilliant and devoted professional staff. It is to be hoped that successive generations will ensure that the School's record in its second half century will be no less distinguished than in its first.

J.R.H.

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